

# MEDIA INFLUENCE ON HYDRAULIC FRACTURING PERCEPTIONS AT ALLEGHENY COLLEGE

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How do members of the Allegheny College community develop their perceptions of fracking and what role does media play in influencing such perceptions?

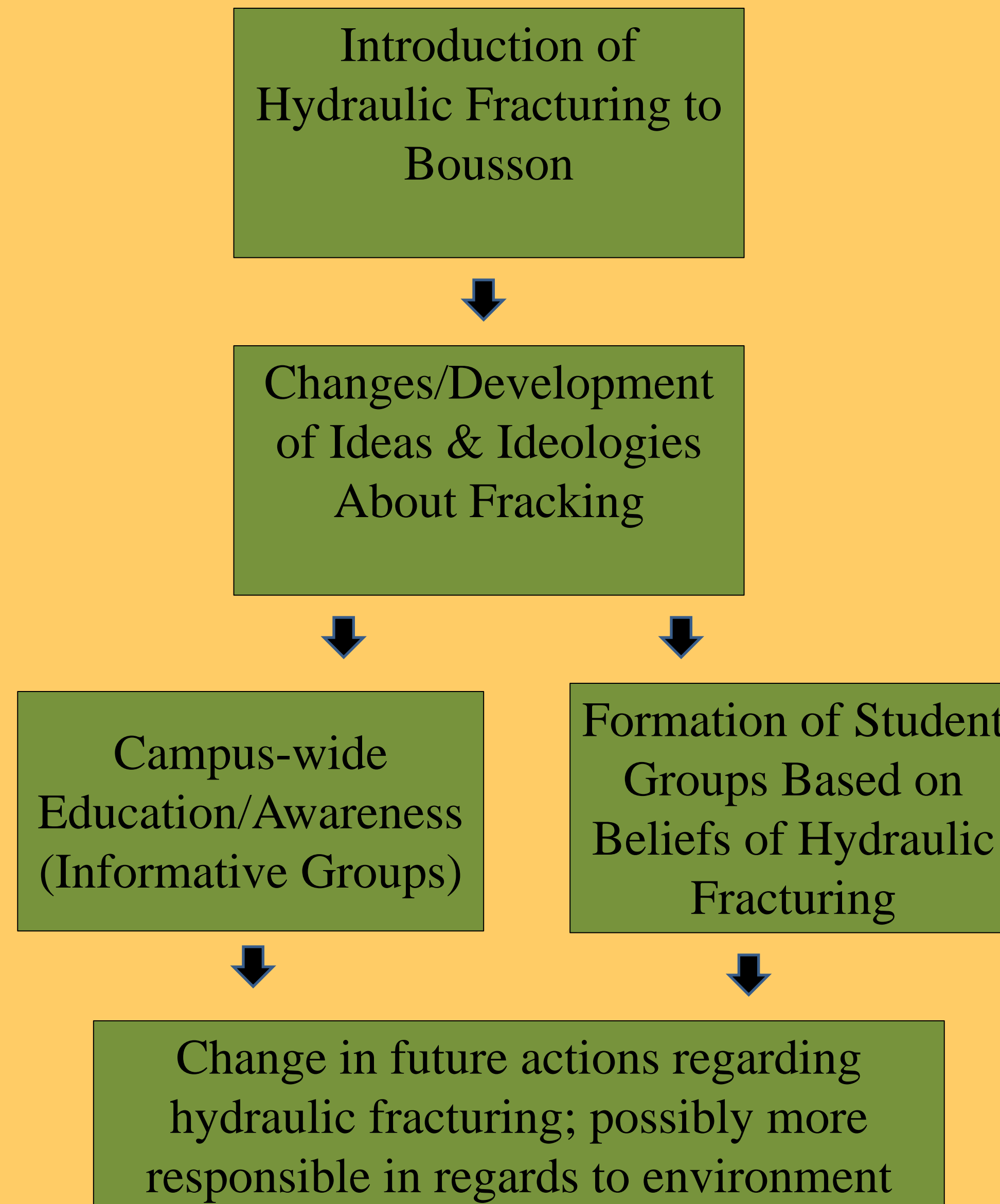
## ABSTRACT

- Dependence on foreign fuels leads to an increased desire for a domestic fuel source
- Our research analyzed perceptions of hydraulic fracturing and how the media influences such viewpoints.
- We conducted several focus groups of Allegheny students in order to develop an understanding as to how people are influenced by the media.
- We concluded that it does play a role in shaping student perceptions on the issue.
- The research was grounded in political ecology and three themes emerged: *The Power of the Media, Style of Defense in Media, and Education as an Important Factor.*

## METHODS

- Participants were chosen using convenience sampling methods
- Focus group discussions were held in Carr Hall, Allegheny College
- Participants completed a “before” survey
- Videos were shown; different order for every focus group
- Semi-structured discussion was held with three pre-determined questions and ended by an open floor discussion;
- Participants then completed “after” survey
- The open-ended responses were coded to organize opinions into categories, which were then used to generate three common themes

## CHANGING PERCEPTIONS



## THEMES

### The Power of Media

- Participants who were previously undecided were influenced by the media
- People with predetermined dispositions were not influenced
- Following focus groups, participants realized the importance of media

### Style of Defense in Media

- Recognized the bias of the videos
- Participants criticized the lack of reliable sources provided by the videos
- Videos played with emotions

### Education as Important Factor

- Increased importance of personal education
- Participants want unbiased facts

## DISCUSSION

### Relation to Political Ecology:

- Hydraulic Fracturing is related to subjects and identities thesis; new environmental systems (hydraulic fracturing) lead to changing ideas creating opportunities for new identities and collective action
- It is considered a new environmental system introduced to an area: Allegheny College
- Due to the different sources of media students are exposed to, many of their views have been influenced on fracking

### Desire for Education

- Direct correlation between a desire for more education and the amount of media exposure
- This research has helped show the shortcomings in the media portrayal of the issue for it lacks unbiased information
- Unbiased information is needed to create environmental change
- Groups have been formed on campus to foster conversation and awareness, such as the Bousson Advisory Group, Students for Environmental Action, etc.

